

Telecommunications and Internet Access Used for Distance Learning 12. Consistent with the draft ESL, we decline to include in the current ESL language that was in previous ESLs explaining that telecommunications and Internet access used for distance learning, video conferencing, and interactive television (often referred to individually and collectively as distance learning), are eligible for E-rate funding. Telecommunications transmission used for distance learning has been eligible from the start of the E-rate program.²⁵ In 2007, the Commission specified that basic conduit access to the Internet for the purpose of accessing distance learning and video conferencing service is eligible.²⁶ 13. We removed the language pertaining to distance learning and video conferencing from the draft ESL because we view this as language that provides an example of an eligible educational purpose – i.e., for accessing distance learning, rather than identifying an eligible service itself. Distance learning is important for education, especially in remote areas where there may be a lack of qualified teachers and educational resources. However, we find it unnecessary to label distance learning as a valid educational purpose for seeking telecommunications transmission or Internet access services over other important educational purposes, such as student online research or access to educational videos or other content. We disagree with those commenters that express concern over removal of this explanation because we do not view this as a change in the status of funding eligibility for telecommunications transmission or Internet access used for distance learning. 27 Although no longer highlighted in the ESL itself, telecommunications transmission and Internet access used for these purposes remains eligible. We also caution applicants that only the underlying transmission providing access to distance learning, video conferencing and interactive television are eligible, and that all of the components that have been ineligible in prior years remain ineligible including non-telecommunications components such as 24 E-rate Modernization Order, 29 FCC Rcd at 8881, para. 26. In the E-rate Modernization Order the Commission began to transition E-rate support to focus specifically on those telecommunications and information services necessary to support broadband to and within schools and libraries. E-rate Modernization Order, 29 FCC Rcd at 8896, para. 70 (stating that the Commission has long supported these types of services, and that section 254(c)(1) and (c)(3) each provide ample authority for the support of broadband telecommunications services, and sections 254(c)(3), (h)(1)(B), and (h)(2) provide authority to support advanced telecommunications and information services). 25 In some funding years, the ESL indicated that “distance learning circuits” were eligible if provided as a telecommunications service. See, e.g., Release of Funding Year 2005 Eligible Services List for Schools and Libraries Universal Service Mechanism, CC Docket No. 02-6, Public Notice, 19 FCC Rcd 20221 (2004). 26 See Release of Funding Year 2008 Eligible Services List for Schools and Libraries Universal Service Mechanism, CC Docket No. 02-6, Public Notice, 22 FCC Rcd 18751 (2007) (2008 ESL). 27 See, e.g., SECA Comments at 2; North Carolina Department of Education Comments at 2; General Communication, Inc. Reply Comments at 1-4. Federal Communications Commission DA 14-1556 6 scheduling services, services for creation, maintenance and storage of content, and charges for distance learning or video conferencing utilities such as web meetings or online collaboration solutions. 28